

Today in National Affairs

Gen. Taylor's Novel Task: To Be Military Statesman

By David Lawrence

WASHINGTON, July 11. — Something experimental and novel has been added to the executive system of the United States—a military statesman in the White House alongside a civilian President.

Throughout military circles, here and abroad, there is widespread curiosity, if not some concern, as to how the new arrangement will work out. Will it eventually mean a single military chief for the United States reporting directly to the President? Will it mean a new supervisor of the whole defense operation, both civilian and military?

These questions have arisen because President Kennedy has selected Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, formerly Chief of Staff of the United States Army, to serve in a special post at the White House covering duties which have never before been entrusted to any single military man.

Naturally, in the armed services themselves there is a bit of worry as to what changes will come. Assurances have been given officially by the President that the Joint Chiefs of Staff will have direct access to him and that the presence of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs at National Security Council meetings will not be in any way of less importance than before.

Most Influential

Yet from a practical point of view, Gen. Taylor is bound to become the most influential man in the shaping of military as well as international policy. For obviously, while the Department of State can express its views on what ought or ought not to be foreign policy from a diplomatic standpoint, all too often the final decision rests upon what military forces are available to back up a decision and what military problems may be introduced if a certain decision is made.

General Taylor is an outstanding military man. He has the respect of his colleagues. He also is thoroughly familiar with the work of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, because he served on it and met certain frustrations there.

Rivalries between the armed services are due to a variety of causes, but the principal one is the amount of financial recognition given to each service through Congressional appropriations. The fear that one service will be given more money, and hence will be permitted to do more things, is usually held by each service chief. The functioning of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has not been as satisfactory as the sponsors of the legislation had hoped when this system was officially created by Congress just after World War II.

But, even during the last war, the Joint Chiefs, though not an official body, participated informally in conferences with the President, who as Commander-in-chief made the final decisions. Problems arising in a "cold war" are very different from those in a hot war. The strategy that must be followed in order to avoid a "shooting war" is often more complex than the military operations involved in defense against attack.

Kennedy's Need

Gen. Taylor believes that the emphasis on nuclear war has resulted in neglect of ground, naval and air forces which are called "conventional" and which would be used in the event that nuclear warfare were ever banned by international agreement.

President Kennedy, however, decided to appoint Gen. Taylor primarily because he needed at his side some one with a military background. President Eisenhower didn't need such a man, as he himself had had this experience in World War II and throughout his lifetime in the military service. But Mr. Kennedy discovered in connection with the Cuban "invasion" that it was difficult to concentrate on an operation as important as this proved to be and yet carry on the normal business of the government.

Gen. Taylor's task, in serving the President, is likely to be one of examination of the reports that come from all sources in the government as they affect the military. He probably will have little or nothing to do with arms production or the Defense Department as such. But he undoubtedly will act as the principal adviser of the President on defense policy and, in a sense, will be somewhere in between the Secretary of Defense and the President when it comes to broad questions of policy-making. This is much to be preferred over the system whereby the Secretary of Defense enters into a constant debate with the Secretary of State as to what should or should not be defense policy, with nobody to decide differences that arise between them.

Co-ordination Main Job

Gen. Taylor's job basically will be to co-ordinate the views of all those concerned with the military services as well as with the diplomatic side, but the final decision upon the recommendations he makes will, of course, be up to the President himself. Mr. Kennedy, on the other hand, will feel better off with an expert analysis of all the information on a controversial subject than he would if he tried to make the decision after listening himself to the contending parties.

Fears and suspicions that all this will make a change in the functions of the Joint Chiefs will continue for a while, and much will depend on the exact manner in which Gen. Taylor performs his duties. It will be up to him to win the confidence of the Joint Chiefs, as well as of the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State, in his job as Liaison man between all of these services and the chief